1; Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1954 AE9 Monguor AE9

the highest, coldest, part of the country. Coal was exploited and mined in a primitive way in one of the valleys north of Hsining and near the junction of the Hsining and Tat'ung Rivers. According to the local *Annals* of Hsining (ch. 31, p. 20*a*), iron was exploited during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644); but the deposits must have been exhausted, because during the period of my stay iron was carried all the way from the Province of Szech'uan on donkeys and mules.

In the Hsining and Tat'ung Rivers, and some of their small tributaries, gold was panned at irregular intervals; south of the Hsining River and in the upper reaches of the Hsining and Tat'ung Rivers, thirty-one auriferous placers were regularly exploited, mostly by Muslims.

The system of communications was primitive. Ox carts could travel on the roads near the larger towns and villages, but most transportation depended on pack-animals, including donkeys, mules, and horses. It was only subsequent to the period covered by this study that a highway was built connecting Lanchou, the capital of the Province of Kansu, with Hsining, the capital of Ch'inghai. The Hsining River was, therefore, the biggest transport asset of the country. From the Hsining River to the Yellow River, which flows by the city of Lanchou, cargoes of grain, wool, skins, vegetable oils, and alcohol were carried on rafts made either of wood or of inflated ox skins as far as the city of Paot'ou, in the Province of Suiyüan, where they were unloaded and carried on by rail to the seaport of Tientsin. Most of this transportation business was in the hands of Chinese Muslims.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the oldest Chinese historical references, the country between the Tat'ung, Hsining, and Yellow Rivers was called Huang Chung and was inhabited by tribes called Ch'iang. The Chinese ideograph for this name indicated that it had the meaning "herders of sheep." The name is one that has never disappeared from Chinese usage in referring to the peoples of the edge of the Tibetan plateau; it is in use to this day. In 202 B.C. the Hsiao Yuehchih, who were probably speakers of an eastern Iranian, Indo-European language, fled from the Hsiung-nu, the principal tribe of the northern Chinese frontier, settled among the Ch'iang tribes, and were absorbed by them.

In 116 B.C. Ho Ch'ü-ping, one of the most famous frontier commanders in Chinese history, came to Huang Chung and founded the first Chinese colonies among the Ch'iang tribes. In A.D. 4 more Chinese colonies were established in the region of Kukunor, but were lost after a few years. This was, in fact, a precarious frontier. For three hundred and sixty years the frontier colonies were often in danger of annihilation, being subject to frequent tribal attack and without support from China proper, because the Later Han dynasty of the first and second centuries A.D. was troubled with chronic dynastic